United Nations A/70/658–S/2016/23

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
8 January 2016

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventieth session
Agenda item 37
The situation in the Middle East

Security Council
Seventy-first year

Letter dated 8 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the letter of Javad Zarif, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, regarding the recent unfortunate developments between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 37, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

16-00251 (E) 120116

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 8 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to begin by wishing you a happy, healthy and peaceful 2016 and to brief you about the unfortunate developments between Iran and Saudi Arabia that have unfolded in the past few days.

We are taking the final steps to announce the Implementation Day of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action between Iran and the E3/EU+3 next week. We had all hoped — and continue to believe — that the resolution of the nuclear issue would enable all of us to focus on addressing the real challenge of extremist violence and terrorism that is ravaging our region and the world. President Rouhani has repeatedly declared that his foreign policy priorities are friendship with neighbours, peace and stability in the region and constructive engagement across the globe. His initiative for a World Against Violence and Extremism (WAVE) received unanimous support from the United Nations General Assembly in 2013, promising a more enlightened far-sighted global campaign against this menace.

Regrettably, immediately after the successful conclusion of the first interim nuclear agreement between Iran and the E3/EU+3 in November 2013, Saudi Arabia focused all its resources to prevent or defeat a comprehensive deal and preclude normalization in the region. Today, there are indications that some in Saudi Arabia are on a mission to drag the entire region into conflict, fearing that removal of the smokescreen of the manufactured Iranian nuclear threat would expose the real global threat posed by extremists and their sponsors. It is an unfortunate reality that most extremist perpetrators of acts of terror from 11 September 2001 to the recent senseless terrorist shooting in San Bernardino and all other episodes of extremist carnage in between — whether in Beirut, Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, Istanbul and Peshawar or in Paris, London, Moscow, Madrid and Ottawa — and most members of Al-Qaida, the Taliban, ISIS and the Al-Nusrah Front were either Saudi nationals or those miseducated in Saudi-financed schools or otherwise brainwashed by petro-financed demagogues, who have promoted an anti-Islamic message of hatred, exclusion and sectarianism across the globe for decades.

The Saudi strategy to derail the nuclear agreement and maintain and even exacerbate tension in the region has focused on three interrelated domains: public relations and pressure in the West, promotion of and even active engagement in war and violence in the region and direct provocation against Iran. Examples of the first two are well known, while the cases of provocation against Iran have not grabbed international headlines thanks primarily to Iranian prudent restraint.

The Saudi public relations machine in Washington, with its strange bedfellows, spared no effort to mislead the United States public about the nuclear agreement throughout last summer. While it failed to defeat the nuclear deal, it now works overtime to compensate by spreading delusional hype against Iran.

On another front, in addition to supporting extremist terrorists in Syria and elsewhere, the senseless war waged by Saudi Arabia in Yemen has raged for nearly 10 months of a senseless aerial campaign targeting the people of Yemen. At the same time, impeding humanitarian access has led to the starvation of innocent civilians in Yemen, and all international efforts to establish a ceasefire and begin a dialogue between Yemeni groups and factions have been thwarted by Saudi Arabia.

Saudi authorities have also engaged in numerous direct and at times lethal provocations against Iran, as the third pillar of this strategy. Iranian self-restraint has prevented this concerted campaign to achieve its goal of exacerbating tension:

- Saudi bombers have hit Iranian diplomatic facilities in Yemen several times, including on 24 April and 18 September 2015 and 7 January 2016, killing two local service personnel, injuring a number of Yemeni guards and inflicting damage on the buildings;

- Saudi authorities have persistently mistreated Iranian pilgrims, fuelling public outrage in Iran:

  - On 28 March 2015, two Saudi immigration officers sexually molested two Iranian boys in Jeddah Airport in broad daylight. They have yet to be punished, as promised, for a crime that they and their extremist cohorts continue to shamelessly boast about on Saudi social media;

  - On 24 September 2015, as a result of the stampede during the Haj pilgrimage in Mena, a suspiciously disproportionate number of Iranian pilgrims — 464 innocent men, women, elderly persons and children — were killed, mostly because of at least utter Saudi negligence, and 521 were injured. For days, Saudi authorities arrogantly refused to respond to the repeated requests by the grieved families and the Iranian Government to have access to and repatriate the bodies, a problem that continues to linger;

- Saudi Government-appointed preachers have made a routine practice of hate speech not only against Iran but against all Shiite Muslims. One most nefarious example is a sermon on 31 March 2015 by Abdul Rahman al-Sudais, the Government-appointed prayer leader at the Mecca Holy Mosque, in which he made a litany of hate speech and incitement for violence against all Shiites, including: "Our war with Iran, say that out loud, is a war between Sunnis and Shiites ... Our war with Iran ... is truly sectarian. If it was not sectarian, we will make it sectarian ... Our disagreement with Rafidha [a derogatory reference to Shiites] will not be removed, nor our suicide to fight them ... as long as they are on the face of the earth ...."[a] The provocative and unjustifiable beheading of a leading Shiite scholar on 2 January 2016 followed another hate speech by the same demagogue on 1 January 2016;

- Saudi Arabia has also engaged in publicly declared economic warfare against Iran, boasting about its intention to strangulate the Iranian economy through a drastic reduction of oil prices;

- Saudi-backed terrorists have repeatedly targeted Iranian diplomatic posts, most notably through suicide attacks in Beirut on 19 November 2013 and in Peshawar on 24 February 2014, killing two Iranian diplomats, four Lebanese and three Pakistani security guards, injuring many innocent bystanders and causing extensive damage to the buildings.

In all these cases, the Islamic Republic of Iran, confident of the strength of its cause, conviction and people, refused to retaliate or break or even reduce diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. Iran has called for Islamic unity in the face of Saudi

[a] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_2e6AlOhdE.

sectarian hate-mongering. And while the Saudi Government or its agents directly targeted Iranian diplomatic facilities, killing Iranian diplomats and other nationals, the Iranian Government has unequivocally condemned the assault against the Saudi Embassy and Consulate on 2 January 2016, ensured the safety and dignity of all Saudi diplomats, took immediate measures to help restore the Saudi diplomatic compound, declared at the highest level its determination to bring all perpetrators to justice, took disciplinary action against those failing to perform their duties to protect diplomatic compounds, and initiated an internal investigation to determine the causes and prevent any recurrence. Let me reiterate that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully committed to comply with all its obligations in accordance with international law and relevant international instruments, especially the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963.

We have no desire for or interest in an escalation of tension in our neighbourhood. We all need to be united in the face of continued threats posed by extremists against all of us. In fact, from the first days after his election, President Rouhani and I have sent public and private signals to Saudi Arabia about our readiness to engage in dialogue and accommodation to promote regional stability and combat destabilizing extremist violence. Saudi Arabia has to make a crucial choice. Either it can continue supporting extremist terrorists and promoting sectarian hatred, or it can opt for good-neighbourliness and play a constructive role in promoting regional stability. We hope that Saudi Arabia will be persuaded to heed the call of reason.

(*Signed*) M. Javad **Zarif**